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ABSTRACT

Russian Village Prose began in the 1950s with articles critical of the way collective farms were being managed and developed into an insider's view of rural life and a celebration of the values and rituals of traditional rural Russia. It represented a new approach to rural themes and characters and a return to literature of high aesthetic quality after several decades of Socialist Realism. This paper examines why Village Prose had run its course by 1980 and discusses ways in which Village Prose and the Village Prose writers have taken part in the rewriting and rereading of literary history in the 1980s. Several authors are cited. It is noted that although the Village Prose period is over, not all the Village Prose written in past decades has yet been published. In any case, the past achievements have permanently enriched contemporary Russian literature. Contains 27 references. (LB)

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Village Prose in the 1980s: Rewriting and Rereading Literary History

Kathleen Parthé, University of Rochester

Russian Village Prose began in the 1950s with articles critical of the way collective farms were being managed and developed into an insider's view of rural life that revolved around nostalgic visits to the village of one's childhood and a celebration of the values and rituals of traditional rural Russia. It represented a new approach to rural themes and characters and a return to literature of high aesthetic quality after several decades of Socialist Realism. The most important writers linked to this movement include: Ovechkin, Dorosh, Soloukhin, Kazakov, Abramov, Solzhenitsyn, Shukshin, Tendrjakov, Yashin, Belov, Rasputin and Astaf'ev. Village Prose is the largest and most unified body of aesthetically interesting and ideologically significant literature to be published in the Soviet Union during the years between Stalin's death and the end of the Brezhnev era.

By the 1980s Village Prose no longer functioned as a viable literary movement in and of itself as it had during the previous two decades, but the legacy of *canonical* Village Prose, its erstwhile writers, and works that evolved from this type of literature—what I call "post-Village Prose"—all were an important part of the literary process.

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I will begin by explaining why I believe that for the most part Village Prose had run its course by 1980. Then I will continue with a number of ways in which Village Prose and the *деревенщики*, "Village Prose writers," have taken part in the rewriting and rereading of literary history in the 1980s.

Valentin Rasputin's *Прощание с Матёрой* (*Farewell to Matjora*, 1976) seemed to its author and to the majority of Soviet critics to "logically complete the village theme."[1] The apocalyptic finale of the work—with fire, flood, and the outside world disappearing in an impenetrable fog—was the strongest possible image for expressing the sense that the traditional village had reached the end of its history. In a frequently cited quotation, Rasputin compared the writing of *Матёра* to the visit of a son to his dying mother.[2] He declared a turning point in his creative life as he, too, "left" the island for the new settlements. By allowing himself to be swept along by currents both literal and figurative, Rasputin opened up the possibility of exploring the theme of the negative impact of rural transformation not only on the traditional village but also on the new settlements that replace it. *Матёра* may have been the most important work on rural themes in the second half of the 1970s, but it was hardly the only one. There was in fact a great deal of activity in the final years of the Village Prose movement. Some of the other works from this period include: Astaf'ev's *Царь-рыба* (*King-Fish*, 1976), the first parts of Mozhaev's *Мужики и бабы* (*Peasant Men and Women*, 1976), Belov's *Кануны* (*The Eve*, 1976), *Дом* (*The House*), the fourth and final volume of Abramov's *Пряслины* (*The Pryaslins*, 1978), Belov's essays on folk aesthetics called *Лад* (*Harmony*, 1978-81), and Lichutin's "Бабушки и дядюшки" ("Grandmothers and Uncles," 1976) and *Последний колдун* (*The Last Wizard*; 1979). There was a very lively and protracted discussion of Village Prose in primarily *Литературная газета* (*Literaturnaja gazeta*) in 1979 and 1980, as there had been in 1967-8.

The elegiacal period of Village Prose, centered on the memoirs of a rural childhood, was drawing to a close. *Деревенская проза* (Village Prose) went through that period of decline and transformation to which all literary movements are subject. It had been pointed out in the criticism at the end of the seventies—and obviously sensed by Rasputin at least—that Village Prose was in danger of repeating itself endlessly and becoming just as clichéd and predictable as its immediate predecessor in the countryside, *колхозная литература* (collective-farm literature). As early as 1974, Vladimir Gusev had

complained that readers were sick and tired of being herded out into the open air ("на лоне всем надоевшей природы") and into log houses and churches: "можно подумать, что иных забот нет в XX веке."[3] By 1981 Igor Shaitanov was writing with obvious impatience: "Все, что можно было вспомнить, вспомнили. Меняются только названия деревень и имена родственников."[4] One problem was that along with very gifted writers, the popularity of Village Prose and the relative ease with which it was published attracted a large number of epigones. The conventions of Village Prose—what I call its parameters—began to be the subject of parodies as well as of outright criticism.

The years 1980-85 were relatively quiet ones for the village writers. The writers' silence was partly due to accidents of fate: for example, the vicious attack on Rasputin (the motive of which seems to have been robbery) in March 1980 and his long recovery period, and the deaths of Kazakov (1982), Abramov (1983), and Tendrjakov (1984). There was also the problem of censorship and editorial timidity which hindered the natural evolution of the movement towards franker accounts of the war time in the countryside and the process of collectivization.[5] Two talented younger writers who began to attract attention are Boris Ekimov and Vladimir Krupin; the latter's semi-documentary "Сороковой день" ("The Fortieth Day"), the story of a visit to his ailing parents in the countryside, was one of the more significant rural works of this period. [His allegorical "Живая вода" ("Living Water") from 1980 also gained a wide audience.][6] But even though this *повесть в письмах* (epistolary tale) continues to display many of the attributes of Village Prose with its focus on loss, nature, folk language and culture, the past, the village, the peasant home, the family, and, in general, things that can be classified as *родной* (native), it is already possible to see how the rural theme is evolving. Krupin's family no longer lives in its traditional village; his father's forestry job caused them to move frequently, so what the author visits is not his *родная деревня* (native village) or his *малая родина* (native region). Still, he tries very hard to think of the place as his *родной дом* (family home). On *покровская родительская суббота* (a Saturday close to the Intercession and devoted to honoring the dead), he goes to the village cemetery as is the custom, but no one is there for him to remember or honor.[7] He thinks about the fact that his *родные* (relatives) are so widely scattered about the country that it would soon be impossible to visit all their graves—a very important ritual in traditional folk life.

It is not only the break-up of the traditional extended family that bothers Krupin. He also is experiencing a crisis of conscience and of confidence as a rural writer. He feels that much of his previous rural journalism has been full of gaps, lies and half-truths. He also senses that there is very little he can add to what has already been said about the countryside:

> ... у нас Распутин, моих лет, так написал о старухе, что после него никто и не сунется .... талант делает для других невозможным писать о том же, о чём пишет он ... становится бессмысленным. А если кому-то больше не о чем писать?[8]

Krupin, who was born in 1941, is already one of the last of those rural writers who could serve as eyewitnesses to the end of traditional village life [the same is true about *военная литература* (war literature), which, as Mozhaev has observed, will be quite different when it is written by people who were not even old enough to experience the war as children].[9] Krupin chose his title aptly: "The Fortieth Day" in Russian Orthodox belief is the day when the soul of the deceased finally leaves the earth and when a large wake is held to commemorate the loved one. His story is an acknowledgement of loss and of endings.

Village Prose as a movement was waning; a number of older and younger writers continued to write on familiar themes, but their work simply did not have the same impact as it would have had in the previous two decades. However, this is far from being the end of our story. Much more was occurring that is related to the Village Prose canon and which would not have happened in the same way had there not been Village Prose. When Rasputin and his colleagues left the village, they did not disappear into thin air.

Rasputin's 1985 story "Пожар" ("The Fire") is generally seen not only as the beginning of the new literature on rural themes about which Rasputin had spoken in 1977, but also as the first important literary work of the age of glasnost.[10] Starting in 1985 we can begin to see the offshoots of *деревенская литература* emerging after several years of germination. I view what happened in the next five years in terms of a complex rewriting and rereading of literary history, and I will spend the rest of my paper sketching out the most important aspects of this process as I understand them.

(1) As Village Prose fragmented, some of its most talented writers carried its themes into urban settings. New settlements

(Sosnovka in "Пожар"), provincial cities [Veisk in Astaf'ev's "Печальный детектив" ("The Sad Detective")] and Moscow itself [in Belov's "Всё впереди" ("Everything Lies Ahead") and Lichutin's *Любостай* (*The Demon*)] became more important settings than the village itself.[11] The emphasis in these works is on the consequences not just of one uprooted person or village, but on the uprooting of the Russian peasants who had for so long been the largest single group in the Russian population. These works are not simply *pro-village*, they are also *anti-city*. In fact, this new line of works by erstwhile *деревенщики* has been called *антигородская литература* (anti-urban literature). In canonical Village Prose the city was far away; it was exciting and even forbidding for villagers, but it was not irredeemably evil, as it becomes in the 1980s. In "Всё впереди" and other similar works, the city is a place of pernicious foreign trends, thoroughly 'cosmopolitan' (a code word used to indicate what is thought to be under Jewish and foreign influence).[12] The numerous wise old peasants of Village Prose have been reduced to a few isolated *праведники* (righteous ones) who seem like cranks to their urban neighbors. The aphoristic, moralizing, uncompromising Avvakum-Dostoevskij-Solzhenitsyn rhetorical line is revived in this literature. And while the rural literature of the seventies still possesses the *светлость* (luminous quality) that we expect in an elegy, 'post-Village Prose' works are very dark with a great deal of attention paid to crime; they are a new twist to nihilism. While nineteenth-century nihilists like Turgenev's Bazarov profess that everything must be destroyed in order to build the new life, writers in the 1980s proclaim that everything old has been destroyed without having achieved a new life and having left a terrible vacuum in the present.[13]

(2) Several rural writers were engaged in concluding long-term projects in the 1980s. Mozhaev and Belov published further volumes of *Мужики и бабы* and *Кануны*, the rural epics which they had begun in the 1970s.[14] Both writers made certain changes in their narrative approach: at the same time that they are taking advantage of relaxed censorship, using newly accessible archival material, and relying less on their own or their families' stories, they paradoxically begin to express markedly chauvinistic feelings. The historical novel, whether it is distorted by prejudice or not, does not really belong to canonical Village Prose which talks about loss in metaphorical rather than ideological terms. These new works foreground the participation of Jews in the events of 1929-30 both at the level of activists coming into

the village and at the highest level of leadership. There is no ambiguity about the author's intent at the beginning of *Год великого перелома* (*The Critical Year*) which continues the story Belov had begun in *Кануны*.

> И когда б в стране имелся хотя бы один не разворованный монастырь, а в нём хотя бы один-единственный не униженный монах-летописец, может, появилась бы в летописном свитке такая запись: "В лето одна тысяча девятьсот двадцать девятого года, в Филиппов пост попущением Господним сын гродненского аптекаря Яков Яковлев поставлен бысть в Московсом Кремле комиссаром над всеми христианы и землепашцы."
> Таких летописцев не было.[15]

Michael Scammell reports that Sergei Zalygin and others at *Новый мир* (*Novyj mir)* tried to convince Belov to tone down such comments but that he resisted their pressure. There seemed to be a similar kind of resistance to the offensive term *еврейчата* (Jew-kids) in Astaf'ev's *Печальный детектив* which showed up in some editions as the innocuous *вейчата* (residents of Veisk).[16]

One would have expected a fuller account of collectivization to have been a part of glasnost literature, but what has been emerging in this kind of work is a collectivization of the Russian countryside without Russians—or Stalin—playing much of a role. This is not a rereading so much of literary history as of history itself. That Belov at least is going to pursue the story of collectivization, as he sees it, is clear from the November 1989 issue of *Наш современник* (*Nash sovremennik*) in which, under the title "Незаживающая рана" ("The Wound That is Not Healing"), he introduces the reader to the two kinds of letters he has received from readers telling him what they or their families experienced in this difficult period. This, of course, is reminiscent of the gulag archive which Solzhenitsyn began to amass after the publication of *Один день Ивана Денисовича* (*One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich).* We might, then, see long gulag-type volumes on this subject from Belov in the future.

Viktor Astaf'ev has also published further installments of his massive rural memoir *Последний поклон* (*The Final Bow*), including three stories in the March 1988 issue of *Наш современник.* These very interesting and well-written works did not follow the new Belov and Mozhaev line. Astaf'ev's apocalyptic and angry trio of stories in the

same journal in May 1986 *were* controversial, especially the ill-tempered "Ловля пескарей в Грузии" ("Fishing for Gudgeon in Georgia") which along with *Печальный детектив* triggered a very spirited and at times exceptionally nasty discussion, the high- or low-point of which was Astaf'ev's correspondence with the late, highly respected scholar Natan Eidelman.

(3) An extension of what I have discussed in (1) and (2) is that the literature which evolved from Village Prose became much less lyrical and much more publicistic to the point that one critic asked whether the very writers who had helped to rid Russian literature of politics had simply done so in order to make room for their own ideological agenda.[17] Rural writers began to speak directly to the public and to devote a greater percentage of their time to publicistic activities. Some of the essays they wrote were primarily ethnographic in character (Rasputin about Siberia, Belov and Lichutin about Northern Russia); but more often in their anger and anxiety for the state of the nation, they have spoken as conservative ideologues. Rasputin, Belov, Astaf'ev, and Lichutin have been particularly outspoken on a number of contemporary issues; readers of such periodicals as *Наш современник* and *Литературная Россия* (*Literaturnaja Rossija*) are regularly treated to their ideas and theories. These statements range from deeply flawed, offensive, and potentially dangerous rereadings of the role of Jews in Russian history, to cranky diatribes on mass culture, especially rock music, and bizarre statements by Lichutin promoting the Russian pagan gods.

(4) A final development in the 1980s involving the *деревенщики* is the publication of Village Prose works which were written in the 1960s but kept in the drawer until recent years. Three of the most interesting of these works are: Soloukhin's "Похороны Степаниды Ивановны" ("Stepanida Ivanovna's Funeral," wr. 1967, pub. in *Новый мир* 1987:9); Tendrjakov's trio of rural stories "Пара гнедых" ("A Pair of Bay Horses"), "Хлеб для собаки" ("Bread for a Dog"), and "Параня" ("Paranya") (wr. 1969-71, pub. in *Новый мир* 1988:3); and Abramov's "Поездка в прошлое" ("A Journey into the Past," wr. 1963-74, pub. in *Новый мир* 1989:5). These are all wonderfully written, rich accounts of rural life which greatly increase our estimation of these writers' talents and, by extension, of the possibilities of Village Prose.[18] It gives lie to the widely-held assumption that censorship had little effect on Village Prose during the period of stagnation and that the writers were free to publish everything they were capable of

writing. It will be interesting to see what else emerges from the drawers of rural writers; the Abramov archive may be especially rich. Soloukhin's autobiographical *Смех за левым плечом (Laughter Behind the Left Shoulder)*, another delayed work, was published in 1988 by Possev and a year later by the Soviet journal *Москва* (*Moskva*, 1989:1).[19] In this half-lyrical, half-sour work, Soloukhin basically rewrites his personal and literary history, berating himself for what he calls the lies and compromises of such works as *Капля росы* (*A Drop of Dew*, 1960). Not content with self-criticism, Soloukhin has begun to dismantle the accepted history of Village Prose which sees Ovechkin's "Районные будни" ("District Routine") and Pomerantsev's essay "Об искренности в литературе" ("On Sincerity in Literature") as the "primary chronicles" of the new rural writing. In the February 1990 issue of *Москва*, Soloukhin spoke of the Ovechkin-style reform-очерк (essay) as having been not useful but harmful literature because its writers still accepted the system of collective farms and were simply trying to expose the inefficient way in which they were run. He sees Abramov as a much more truthful and therefore useful writer.[20] This is a major restatement of the development of rural literature in the post-Stalinist period.

Soloukhin has not been alone in his rereading and rewriting of literary history; on the contrary, this has been a favorite occupation in the glasnost years. At first, Village Prose benefited from this process. As the various threads of Russian literature were unified, with the return of emigré literature and works written in the Soviet Union but never before published there, critics began to look at the whole course of Russian literature in the Soviet period; and the important role that Village Prose played was openly acknowledged. Jurij Davydov wrote that wherever the "moral-philosophical 'nucleus'" of Russian literature resided in the decades after the Revolution, it definitely "returned" to Russia in the 1960s through the works of Soviet Russian Village Prose writers.[21] Nikolai Anastas'ev called the *деревенщики* the "direct and legitimate heirs to the Russian classicial tradition." He reminded readers that these rural writers had bypassed the now openly derided Socialist Realism tradition and looked to pre-Revolutionary literature for their inspiration. Galina Belaja had earlier warned of the harm done when past literary history is forgotten.[22] The emigré poet Naum Korzhavin, in answer to an "анкета" (questionnaire) from *Иностранная литература* (*Inostrannaja literatura*), wrote that Village Prose and all it has meant to Russian literature has been "unjustly forgotten"

because the flowering of this movement coincided with the "period of stagnation." He went on to say:

> Какие бы факторы ни позволили ей тогда состояться, какие бы странные высказывания ни допускали сегодня некоторые её представители ... это не застойная, а настоящая литература—к тому же много сделавшая в то трудное время и делающая сейчас для восстановления исторической правды и развития общественного самосознания ...[23]

S. Frederick Starr, in a recent essay, has described canonical Village Prose as highly critical literature which "encouraged public dialogue on reform" because it revealed the "poverty, aimlessness, and spiritual alienation in large parts of the population."[24] What Korzhavin calls "strange statements" refers of course to the chauvinistic pronouncements made by a number of erstwhile Village Prose writers.[25] Because of these activities and because of legitimate fears of the potential dangers in a revival of extreme Russian nationalism, canonical Village Prose has been reread as being the seedbed of chauvinism with erstwhile Village Prose writers as being its chief architects. The situation has reached the point in which Vasilij Aksjonov can call the *деревенщики* "писатели нацисты" ("writer-Nazis").[26]

I analyze this very complex situation at length in my book *The Radiant Past: Russian Village Prose from Ovechkin to Rasputin.*[27] I will make just a few remarks here.

(1) Anti-semitism has been present in Russia for a very long time. There would have been a revivial of anti-semitism even if Village Prose had never existed. When Village Prose ended as a movement in the late 1970s, before the rise of Pamjat', it was seen as moderately nationalist.

(2) The revival of anti-semitism in the 1980s came from primarily urban stimuli and urban activists. Several rural writers chimed in around 1987.

(3) Literary critics (Chalmaev, Lobanov, V. Gorbachev, et al.) in the 1960s and 1970s turned the metaphors of Village Prose into ideological concepts and did much more to consciously promote the rise of Russian chauvinism than did the writers themselves. This to some extent mirrors the situation, with different political content, in the mid-nineteenth century in the critical essays, for instance, of Belinskij, Dobroljubov, Chernyshevskij, and Pisarev.

(4) Belov, Rasputin, and Astaf'ev, the rural writers most involved in making chauvinistic pronouncements, have generally done so in letters, interviews, speeches, and publicistic essays, not in their fictional works.

To understand the role of Russian Village Prose in the 1980s, we have to be clear about when literary movements begin and end and about the difference between what a writer presents within an artistic work and outside of it. It helps to think more in terms of a *деревенская проза* which began in the 1950s and had ended by 1980 and of some of the village writers going on to other types of activities in the 1980s which may be related to Village Prose themes but which are not identical to Village Prose.

It is important to remember that not only urban writers had a *долгий ящик* (drawer) for unpublishable works, but that there is some volume of *задержанная* (delayed) Village Prose which we are beginning to see and which may contain works of great literary and historical interest. The Village Prose movement may be over, but not all of the Village Prose written in previous decades has appeared.

Because the generation of eyewitnesses to traditional rural life is an aging population for whom there can be no replacements, the 1990s can bring very few new talents; young writers will find other themes or settings. But Village Prose has had an important role in the post-Stalinist period, and this role should not be ignored in the incredibly complex literary process in Russia today. No matter whether such erstwhile *деревенщики* as Rasputin, Belov, and Astaf'ev return to lyrical fiction or whether they continue to exercise an, at times, pernicious influence as public figures, such past achievements as *Прощание с Матёрой, Лад,* and *Последний поклон* have permanently enriched contemporary Russian literature.

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[1] Лилия Вильсек, "Вниз по течению деревенской прозы," *Вопросы литературы,* № 6 (1985), с. 72.

[2] Валентин Распутин, "Не мог не проститься с Матёрой," *Литературная газета,* 16 марта 1977; trans. as "I Had to Say Goodbye to Matjora," *Soviet Studies in Literature,* Vol. 14, no. 3 (Summer 1978), p. 43.

[3] Владимир Гусев, *В предчувствии нового* (Москва: Советский писатель, 1974), сс. 197-8; as quoted by Светов, с. 4.

[4] Игорь Шайтанов, "Реакция на перемены (Точка зрения автора и героя в литературе о деревне)," *Вопросы литературы*, № 5 (1986), с. 59.

[5] My discussions with Village Prose writers have confirmed this point. For example, in rural scenes taking place in occupied areas during World War II, writers might be asked to include Soviet partisans even when this is historically incorrect. Also, publication of several of the more critical chronicles of collectivization was delayed for several years.

[6] Владимир Крупин, "Сороковой день," *Наш современник*, № 11 (1988).

[7] On the many "Parents' Saturdays" see: George P. Fedotov, *The Russian Religious Mind: Kievan Christianity, the Tenth to the Thirteenth Centuries* (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), p. 16.

[8] Крупин, с. 93.

[9] Boris Mozhaev, remarks at the "Topicality of Contemporary Soviet Literature" conference, University of Amsterdam, May 31-June 2, 1988.

[10] Валентин Распутин, "Пожар," *Наш современник*, № 7 (1985); also Gerald Mikkelson and Margaret Winchell, "Valentin Rasputin and His Siberia," Intro. to *Siberia on Fire: Stories and Essays by Valentin Rasputin* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois UP, 1989), p. xvii.

[11] Виктор Астафьев, *Печальный детектив*, *Октябрь*, № 1 (1986); Василий Белов, "Всё впереди," *Наш современник*, № 7-8 (1987); Владимир Личутин, *Любостай* (Москва: Современный писатель, 1987).

[12] Belov even goes so far as to contrast the healthy perspiration of the Russian peasant to the nasty *международный пот* (international sweat) that one notices in a tourist attraction like Moscow's Tretjakov Gallery. Negative female characters have hair that smells of foreign shampoo.

[13] See for example: Виктор Астафьев, "Людочка," *Новый мир*, № 9 (1989).

[14] Борис Можаев, *Мужики и бабы*, *Дон*, № 1-3 (1987); Василий Белов, *Кануны*, *Новый мир*, № 3 (1989). This installment of *Кануны* is known as *Год великого перелома* (*The Critical Year*).

[15] Белов, *Год великого перелома*, с. 6.

[16] Sheila Kunkle, "Nationalism, Chauvinism and Viktor Astaf'ev's *Pechal'nyj Detektiv,*" in *Graduate Essays on Slavic Languages and Literatures*, University of Pittsburgh, Dept. of Slavic Languages and Literatures, vol. 2 (1989), pp. 96-7.

[17] А. Хватов, "Знаки подлинности. Заметки о современной литературе," *Звезда*, № 3 (1987), с. 186.

[18] The Soloukhin story is a Voinovich-like, darkly humorous tale about his mother's death and burial. The Tendrjakov stories take place, respectively, during 1929, 1933, and 1937 and show the effect of collectivization, de-kulakization, and the purges on the author as a boy. Abramov's hero discovers his father's true identity and then dies.

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19 A few days after I presented this paper at Bryn Mawr College in May, 1990, an interview with Soloukhin appeared in which he discussed various works that he had been waiting to publish for years, including a five-hundred page manuscript called *Последная ступень* (*The Final Stage*), written in 1976. It is scheduled to appear in the journal *Москва* as soon as the author has had time to prepare it for publication. Soloukhin also wants to reissue previous works in their uncut form. Владимир Солоухин, "Идти по своей тропе. Интервью перед публикацией," *Литературная газета*, 30 мая 1990, с. 4.

20 Владимир Солоухин, "Это был боец, воин, рыцарь .... К 70-летию со дня рождения Фёдора Абрамова," *Москва*, № 2 (1990), сс. 167-8.

21 Jurij Davydov's remarks are part of a dialogue with Николай Анастасьев, "Любовь к 'ближнему' или 'дальнему'?," *Литературная газета*, 22 фев. 1989, с. 2.

22 Галина Белая, "Перепутье," *Вопросы литературы*, № 12 (1987), с. 75.

23 Наум Коржавин, in "Резонанс. На анкету 'ИЛ' отвечают писатели русского зарубежья," *Иностранная литература*, № 3 (1989), с. 249.

24 S. Frederick Starr, "The Road to Reform," in Abraham Brumberg, ed. *Chronicle of a Revolution: A Western-Soviet Inquiry into Perestroika* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1990), p. 25.

25 Primarily Rasputin, Belov, and Astaf'ev, although several more—Krupin, Lichutin, and Likhonosov—signed the 'letter of 74' in the March 2, 1990 issue of *Литературная Россия*. It was one of the most disturbing statements of the Gorbachev era.

26 Василий Аксёнов, "Не вполне сентиментальное путешествие," *Новое русское слово*, 16 марта 1990, с. 10. This article was translated by Moira Ratchford and Josephine Woll as: Vasilij Aksjonov, "Not Quite a Sentimental Journey," *The New Republic*, April 16, 1990, p. 24. Rasputin has been especially singled out for attention in such places as "National Public Radio" and *The New York Times* because of his position on Gorbachev's inner council.

27 Forthcoming, Princeton University Press.